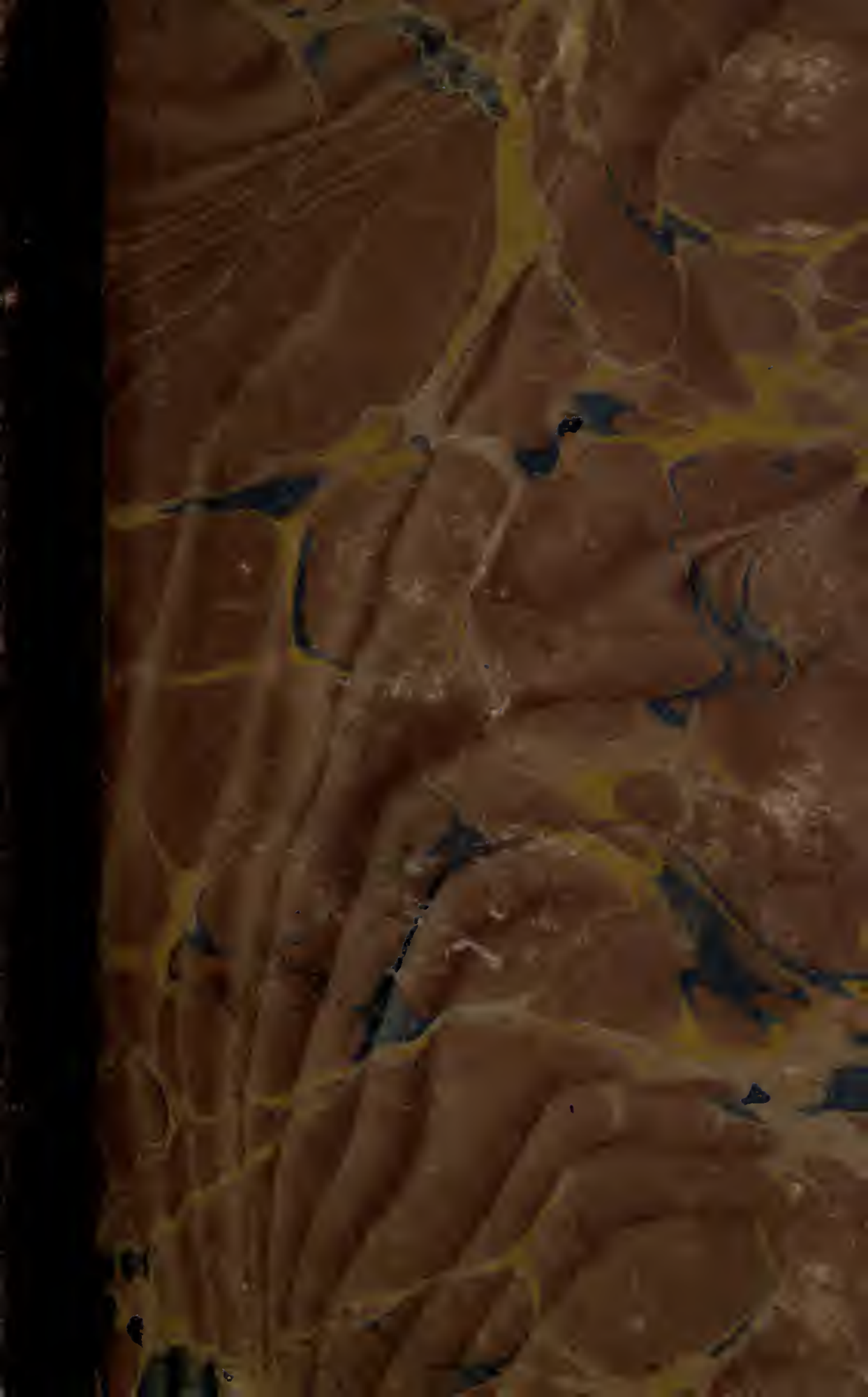

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CHILDREN'S BOOK
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June 18. 34

MARY GRAY.

The Squirrel

——busily employed in picking to pieces one of the long cones of the larch pine, to find the seeds, which it ate very readily: —

London. Published by Harvey & Darton, 1832.

MARY GRAY:

A

TALE FOR LITTLE GIRLS.

BY ANNE KNIGHT.

Up!—let us to the fields away,
And breathe the fresh and balmy air:
The bird is building in the tree,
The flower has open'd to the bee,
And health, and love, and peace are there!

MARY HOWITT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HARVEY AND DARTON,
GRACECHURCH-STREET.

MDCCCXXXI.

LONDON:
Joseph Rickerby, Printer, Sherbourn Lane.

TO

MARY AND SUSANNA U——.

My dear little Girls,

To you I dedicate this little volume, because you have been frequently my companions in country walks. We have sought together for the first sweet violet and primrose of spring; we have read together and worked together; and the pleasure I have received from your diligent application to known duties, as well as from other indications of a desire to furnish your minds with knowledge, induces me to hope that an acquaintance with my little Mary Gray will not prove disagreeable to you.

Every step to knowledge opens new delights. And as you advance from the ignorance of childhood towards maturer years, I trust you will endeavour to secure, from each successive day's observation, an addition to that stock of intelligence with which Wisdom, in after life, must build.

That you, my sweet children, may grow up as useful and good as your most interested friends can desire, is the sincere and earnest wish of,

Yours, affectionately,

A. K.

TO THE READER.

Youthful Reader, dost thou ask
  Who, or what is Mary Gray?
Mine shall be the willing task
  Somewhat of her to pourtray.

Mary Gray is Nature's child,
  Fond of garden, grove, and field,
And the pleasures undefiled
  These to simple childhood yield.

In the spring, with her mamma,
  Dearly she enjoys a walk;
Or, with uncle and papa,
  Just as much delights to talk.

But she sometimes loves to listen;
  For a book can grateful be;
And her bright blue eyes can glisten
  With a tear, for all her glee.

If, like her, thou hast been taught
  Nature's humblest charms to love,
And to gather food for thought,
  In the garden, field, or grove;

If, like her, thou lov'st to hear
  Pleasant tales of distant climes,
And to lend a willing ear
  To the poet's simplest rhymes;

Then may "MARY GRAY" to thee
  Be a friend, although unknown;
And her happiest hours shall be
  Through these pages made thy own.

INTRODUCTION.

I AM frequently surrounded by a group of little boys and girls, who interest me very much when they are good. This is generally the case; though sometimes, when they suffer idleness or forgetfulness of their duty to creep in, my enjoyment of their company is sadly interrupted, and I am then obliged to use my authority to set all in good order again.

Every day these dear children read aloud to me, and are often pleased when they

gain any useful information from the books that we select, or from the conversation that we have together. And I am equally well pleased to converse with them on such subjects as are instructive to them.

Several of my very young friends have lately had presents of some pretty little books, such as "Mary and her Cat," "The Workbox," "The Dove," "The Cowslip Gatherers," &c. all of which they have perused with so much pleasure, as to desire a continuation of these amusing stories, or something more of a similar kind. I doubt not there are many more to be had, equally amusing and profitable, but as I am requested to tell, from the stores of my memory, some little history while we sit at work, I shall endeavour to

relate a few circumstances that have come under my knowledge.

I do not approve of fictitious tales, or those which have no truth in their composition; therefore my narrative of this little girl will be interspersed with anecdotes of various animals, and other subjects that have already afforded much pleasure to other children.

MARY GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

MARY GRAY, at ten years old, was very much like most other children of the same age—lively and thoughtless. She was happy in having a kind mother, who wished her child to grow up good and useful; Mary was, therefore, never foolishly indulged in the gratification of any childish fancies, that might tend to make her selfish or ill-humoured. On the contrary, her mother, though affectionately attentive, taught her to govern her temper, to be

gentle to all around her, and to compassionate the poor. At the same time, Mary was instructed in all that was needful at her age; one morning was devoted to the study of geography and grammar, the next to French and drawing; and with writing and needlework, her employments were so varied, that none became tiresome to her.

It is true, Mary loved play as well as any little girl, and often felt tempted to spend more time in the garden, on a fine sunny morning, with her ball and hoop, (which were allowed her for healthy recreation,) than was quite right; or, at other times, in arranging the domestic affairs of her dolls and baby-house, when she ought to have been otherwise employed. But her mother's reasonings were not lost upon her; and, as Mary found out the value and pleasure of employment, she visited her

playthings less, and only at proper times, yet they never ceased to be in great favour when she had leisure to attend to them.

This improvement, of course, gave her mother much pleasure, and she never objected to Mary having sufficient play to benefit her health and spirits. Youth is the season for vivacity; and as no one wishes to see children dull and inactive, they should be encouraged to play with energy, when the business of instruction is over.

In fine weather Mary frequently walked with her mamma to enjoy the beauty of the country. At these times, Mrs. Gray directed the attention of her little girl to the beauty of plants and animals, telling her of their various uses, and of the great goodness of God, who created them for our service. She explained to her that all ani-

mals deserve kind treatment, not only such as are of use to us, but those also which cannot render us any services; for as they have all been formed by the same merciful Creator as ourselves, we cannot use them ill without offending Him. Nor can any thing give more pain to a feeling heart, than to see a helpless child treat a being that has life with unkindness. Such practices destroy the best feelings of our nature, and rob it of those gentle graces that ought to be its ornament through life.

One fine morning in spring, Mary awoke earlier than usual. The sunbeams not only peeped in at her window, but shone full upon the pillow where her head had been long resting, and by their brilliancy roused the little girl from her slumbers. She jumped up with a heart full of grateful enjoyment, dressed herself quickly, and

was hastening towards the garden, to visit her sweet flowers spangled with dewdrops, when she met Susan holding out to her a letter, which had been just left by a kind friend of the family, as a morning present to his little favourite. Mary eagerly opened the paper, and, to her great delight, found it was written in a plain, legible hand, seemingly on purpose that she might have the pleasure of reading it first herself.

The contents of this paper were so in unison with Mary's happy feelings on that lovely morning, that, after having carefully read them over, she lost no time in committing them to memory; and on meeting her beloved parents an hour afterwards, presented them with the agreeable surprise of being able to recite a copy of verses quite new to them. Mary received, with great delight, the smiles of approba-

tion which were bestowed upon her; and as I wish my young readers to share in her pleasure, I will introduce the subject to them at the commencement of my next chapter.

CHAPTER II

MARY GRAY'S WELCOME TO SPRING.

Welcome, merry Spring, to me,
  Glad am I to see thee here;
For thou ever bringst with thee
  Sights and sounds to childhood dear!

Violets blue, primroses pale,
  Of thy balmy breath are born;
Those are in the shelter'd vale,
  These the sunny banks adorn.

Lambs about the meadows play,
  Skylarks soaring sing above;
And the cuckoo's merry lay
  Echoes from the distant grove.

Blackbird, thrush, and blithesome linnet,
Each tries which can sing the best;
Every tree has music in it,
Many a lowly bush its nest.

Soon the nightingale will come
To his last year's favourite tree,
And the busy bee will hum
Round the jasmine and sweet pea.

Through the ivy's darksome shade
Wall-flower blossoms soon will spring,
And the clematis its braid
Round them both its fragrance fling.

Welcome, welcome, merry Spring!
Making fields and gardens gay;
Well thy blythe return may bring
Gladsome thoughts to MARY GRAY.

Barton.

Spring time was peculiarly a source of enjoyment to Mrs. Gray and her daughter. After having been confined to the house by the stormy days and dark evenings of

winter, our little girl gained fresh spirits by seeing how quickly the banks were covered with sweet-smelling flowers, that sprang up among moss and beautiful green leaves, where, a few weeks before, they could only discern the dull brown earth, and crisped leaves blown about by the wind. Then, too, the little birds were all busily employed constructing their nests, and singing so merrily, that Mary was quite delighted to hear their cheerful notes, and would skip and dance about as gaily as a little wild rabbit.

One morning their walk was over a hilly field called a warren, where numbers of those pretty gay creatures were frisking about, for it is in such places that rabbits commonly live. In the light sandy earth they scratch holes and burrow deep, throwing up the loose mould round the outsides

of the holes, so as almost to hide the entrance from sight. These little animals are so timid, that whenever they hear or see any thing approaching, they instantly skip into their burrows, and lie securely buried under the surface of the ground. Mary loved to see them frisk about in play, but she regretted that her favourite little spaniel, Fido, often caused them great alarm, by intruding unceremoniously among them; and sometimes she was disposed to give him a good scolding. Her mother, however, explained to her that the nature of dogs is to hunt hares, rabbits, and other wild animals; and therefore she must not correct Fido, who did not follow them through unkindness, or a wish to tease, but because instinct guided him to try and catch them. Dogs are often employed for this purpose by persons who sell rabbits.

"Though these animals are so small," continued Mrs. Gray, "they are found very serviceable to man. Their flesh is good to eat, and the soft grey fur, growing close to the skin, is made into hats, when mixed with the beautiful fine down of the beaver, a curious animal found in North America. The rabbit does not seem naturally fond of keeping in its burrow, though it finds this retreat safe and convenient. It loves the sunny field and open pasture, and seems to be a chilly animal, disliking the coldness of its underground habitation. This may be easily accounted for, as the rabbit, though so very plentiful in Great Britain and Ireland, is nevertheless a native of warmer climates, and was originally brought to this country from Spain. In fact, they are generally found to flourish in a warm region, and to be

incapable of bearing the cold of the north. In Sweden they can only live when taken care of in houses; though, in climates still warmer than our own, they are extremely common, and very seldom burrow. The English counties most noted for these animals in a wild state, are Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire, which you know, Mary, are all on the eastern side of England."

Mary thanked her indulgent mother for giving her this description, so easy to be understood; and begged to know if they might not return home by Hawthorn Lane, as she wished to see if there were yet any blossoms on the beautiful bushes that shaded its sloping banks.

"I can have no objection, my dear," said her mother, "since it will make a pleasant change in our walk, and we may

perhaps see something that will be new to us before we reach home."

Away tripped Mary and Fido in great glee, till they were nearly out of sight; when recollecting herself, the little girl ran gaily back again to meet her mamma. On approaching, Mary found something had engaged her mother's attention among a group of fir-trees, and she eagerly enquired what there was to be seen. Mrs. Gray held up her finger in token of silence, and pointed to an elegant little creature near them. It was sitting upon a branch of the opposite tree, busily employed in picking to pieces one of the long cones of the larch pine, to find the seeds, which it ate very readily; now and then making a sort of chattering noise with much quickness, as if calling to its fellows. Another soon made its appearance, something smaller than the

first, but equally pretty, and began to share in the repast.

"These are squirrels," whispered Mary's mother: "let us not alarm them." They then stood for some minutes watching the motions of these animals, and were highly amused to see their nimble actions, as they skipped from branch to branch, and even from one tree to another; till at length, the squirrels being too far off to be any longer observed or frightened, Mary, without fear of disturbing them, asked if her mamma could tell her how they came there.

"They are inmates of the grove, my love," answered her mother; "that means, they make their home in those trees we see yonder; and, though wild, they are but half savage, for the gentleness and innocence of their manners, give them a claim

to our protection. The squirrel is a beautiful little creature, as you have seen, and delights to make its abode in lofty trees, where it feeds on wild fruits, nuts, and acorns. It is cleanly, active, nimble, and industrious: its eyes are sparkling, and its face full of meaning. Like the hare and rabbit, it frequently sits up on its hinder legs, turning its large bushy tail up over its back. It will then use its fore paws in the place of hands to hold nuts and acorns, the kernels of which it scoops out with much facility. On these paws it has five claws, or toes, as they are called; and one of them is separated from the rest like a thumb.

"In its light, airy motions, and surprising agility on the tops of trees, the squirrel seems to approach the nature of birds. It seldom descends to the ground, except in

cases of storms, but jumps continually from one branch to another, feeding in spring on the buds and shoots; in summer, on fruits and the young cones of the pine-trees. In autumn it has an extensive variety to feed upon, being the season of dainties. The acorn, the filbert, the chesnut, the wilding, and many fruits, provide it with the most plenteous repasts. This little animal, however, holds out a pleasing example, my dear Mary, to beings possessed of higher powers; for it does not spend this season of plenty in idle enjoyment: the provident creature gathers, at that time, its store of provisions for the approaching winter, cautiously foreseeing the season when the forest shall be stripped of its leaves and fruitage."

"Oh! what a happy and industrious life," said Mary. "But how can it live in

the trees at night, mamma? and what becomes of its young ones, when it has any? Surely they cannot always remain on the boughs of a tree."

"No, my dear; the squirrel provides itself with a home as carefully as it secures a stock of provisions for a time of need. It forms a curious nest, in that part of a tree where the large branches begin to fork out into smaller ones. After choosing a place where it finds the timber is beginning to decay, that a hollow may more easily be made, the squirrel sets about his work by nibbling and scratching to form a level between the forked branches. He then brings moss, twigs, and dry leaves, binding them together with great dexterity, so as to resist the most violent storms. This is carefully covered in on all sides, and has but a single opening at the top, just large

enough to admit its inmate; and this opening is itself curiously defended from the weather by a kind of thatched canopy, pointed at the top, so that it throws off the rain. The nest thus formed with a very little opening above, is nevertheless very commodious and roomy below—soft, well fastened together, and every way convenient and warm."

"What a nice little house you have described, mamma! Do you not think squirrels must be very clever animals, to think so much about providing comforts against bad weather?"

"They appear to be possessed of a large share of instinct, Mary," said Mrs. Gray; "and that, you know, is a faculty bestowed by the Almighty Creator on all animals, to enable them to fulfil the several tasks which he has assigned to them. As squir-

rels are not reasoning creatures, like mankind, I can hardly suppose they think about the future; but instinct *impels* them, at the proper season, to make all these arrangements. In the safe retreat which this nest affords, the little creature brings up its young, shelters itself and them from the scorching heat of the sun, which it seems to fear; and from the storms and inclemencies of winter, which it is still less capable of supporting."

"But, mamma," asked Mary, "can the nest be made large enough to hold the family of squirrels, and the store of food which you said is gathered together?"

"No, my love; its store of nuts and acorns is seldom in its nest, but carefully laid up in the hollow places of the tree: this stock is preserved with so much care, that it is only resorted to in cases of ne-

cessity. Thus you find one single tree serves for a retreat and a storehouse; and without leaving it during the winter, the little animal possesses all those enjoyments that its nature is capable of receiving. But alas! Mary, there is no certainty of happiness in life: even the poor little squirrel has its enemies; and it sometimes happens that its mansion is attacked by a very powerful one. The martin often goes about in quest of a retreat for its young, which it has not capacity to make for itself; and finding the squirrel's snug little nest is in every respect a commodious lodging, with double injustice it destroys the harmless tenant, and then takes possession of the habitation."

"Oh! the poor little creature," cried Mary, "that is a cruel thing indeed. Pray what is a martin, mamma?"

"It is an animal of the weasel kind, my dear, and the most beautiful of all the British beasts of prey; but it is sly, cruel, and voracious. Its motions are very graceful, and it has so much agility, that there is scarcely an animal in our woods that will venture to oppose it. Quadrupeds five times as large are easily vanquished by it: even the wild cat itself is not a match for the martin, though they seldom meet without a combat. There are several different kinds, but each feeds on birds, rabbits, squirrels, poultry, and even lambs, which it destroys by sucking their blood. These animals are more common in North America than in Europe: they are found in all the northern parts of the world, and in every country are hunted for the sake of their skins, which are very valuable."

While Mary and her mother were con-

versing in this agreeable manner, they had reached the lime-tree walk which led to their house; and as the morning was now far advanced, and the sun beamed forth a warmth rather oppressive for the time of year, they were not sorry to avail themselves of so friendly a shade, and entered the hall, refreshed by their ramble, and gratified by the interesting subjects it had offered to them.

"Go now and prepare for dinner, my love," said Mrs. Gray: "papa will soon be at home, and enquiring, as usual, for his little girl. To-morrow we may have something more to talk about; and I hope we shall again view, with pleasure, such of the wonderful works of Nature as our limited perambulations can display."

At length dinner-time arrived, and Mary was delighted to sit between her father and

brother, to whom she felt anxious to relate the adventures of the morning. But having happily learned to practise the pleasing habit of being quiet at meals, she waited patiently till the cloth was removed, and then had as many things to tell about, and was as affectionate a listener, as any little chatterbox could desire.

In the evening our little friend was sitting at the table by her kind mamma, busily engaged arranging a dissected chart of the British sovereigns, when a note was brought in, neatly sealed, and directed to Mary Gray. Her eyes glistened with delight. Kings and queens were soon forgotten, though arrayed in all the splendours of royalty: even her favourite Edward the Sixth, looking so gentle and so good, was laid aside, while she opened the paper and read the following lines:—

THE SQUIRREL.

"The squirrel is happy, the squirrel is gay!"
Little Harry exclaim'd to his brother:
"He has nothing to do, or to think of but play,
And to jump from one bough to another."

But his brother was older and wiser—he knew
That all play and no work would not answer;
So he asked "what the squirrel hereafter must do,
If he play'd but the part of a dancer?"

"The squirrel, dear Harry, is merry and wise,
And 'tis well when these moods come together;
So he lays up in autumn his winter supplies,
And then he defies the cold weather!"

CHAPTER III.

The ivied cot, the ivied cot,
A blessing on its hearth!
Tho' poor may be its inmates' lot,
Respect their lowly worth:
The bolt which strikes the castle tower
Oft spares the peasant's humble bower.

THE next day, after the business of the morning was finished with usual diligence, and to Mrs. Gray's full satisfaction, she proposed to Mary that they should again set out to enjoy the fineness of the weather. The little girl did not wait to be reminded a second time, but ran briskly to ask the

assistance of her mother's servant, in order to be neatly dressed. Susan complied very good-humouredly; and as Mary was accustomed to the useful maxim, "A place for every thing, and every thing in its place," the task of dressing was very soon accomplished, and the little girl descended to the breakfast-parlour to rejoin her mother.

Mrs. Gray was soon ready, and calling their faithful companion Fido, they set out through the garden, which already began to look gay with the early spring flowers.

Instead of choosing a hilly walk this morning, Mary and her mother took their way towards a village, situate in a valley at a short distance. Going down a pleasant shady lane, they came to a pretty rural cottage, nearly covered with luxuriant ivy, which crept not only up the front, but over the thatched roof, barely allowing the

narrow windows and humble chimney to be seen through. An old shattered stone-wall too, partially surrounding a small flower-garden, was beautifully clothed with the dark-green foliage of this creeping plant. Struck with admiration at this lovely spot, they stood for some time to examine the peculiar growth of the ivy, from whose branches shoot forth innumerable slender fibres, or shoots, which cling to every thing within their reach. As the leaves expand to the sun and air, they form a thick covering, not only to the rough brown stems of the plant itself, but as it creeps up the sides of old buildings and trunks of trees, nearly hide them from our sight, affording also a sheltered roosting-place to many poor birds, and is almost their only refuge in the cold season of the year.

"Observe, my Mary," said her mother, "how abundant is the fruit of the ivy, now that no other berries are to be found. Different from almost all other plants, the berries of the ivy become ripe during the earliest months of spring, when the wild products of the fields are nearly all consumed, and the weather is often bitterly cold. At this season the ivy renders essential service to many wandering tenants of the air, preserving them from want and death. Its generous supply of black shining berries, constitute almost entirely the food of the missel-thrush, wood-pigeon, and some other wary birds, too shy to approach the dwellings of mankind, except when urged by hunger. In its close covert also, the blackbird and thrush find a secure retreat to conceal their nests. These birds build early in the spring, when the

foliage of the hedges is yet too thin to afford them a safe hiding-place for their little habitations; and did not the ivy offer its friendly assistance and shelter, perhaps very few nests would be preserved from the prying young eyes that are so mischievously apt to seek them.

"In autumn too, the ivy is no less beneficial to the swarms of insect life, than it is in spring to the feathered part of the creation. During the month of October it blooms in profusion, and spreading itself over the warm side of some neglected wall, or the sunny bark of an old pollard-tree upon a bank, its flowers become a universal banquet to the insect race. In the fine clear days for which that month is often remarkable, we may observe numerous tribes of flies, especially the great black fly, with multitudes of other small winged

creatures resorting to its thickly strewn bunches of blossom. And there also are to be seen those beautiful creatures, the latest birth of the year, the admiral and peacock butterflies, hanging with expanded wings, like open flowers, themselves enjoying the sunny gleam, and feasting on the sweet juices of the fully-opened flowers. As the blossoms do not all come to perfection at the same time, there is a constant succession of honey produced as the buds unfold, which yields a profitable supply of food till the frosts of winter either destroy the insects, or drive them to their winter retreats. I have read some lines on this useful plant, which I think will please you, and will therefore repeat them as we walk down the shady side of this sloping meadow, if you would like to hear them.

THE IVY.

Oh ! do not scorn the ivy-bough,
My playful little maid ;
Its wreath is worthier of thy brow
Than flow'ret's brightest braid.

For these, when nipt by winter's blast,
Will soon be dread and drear :
But long the ivied crown will last
And bright and green appear.

It will but shine more green and bright
When leafless many a spray ;
Like Friendship's worth and Virtues light
In Sorrow's cloudy day.

Then let it be to thee a sign
To choose thy pleasures by,
And turn from those that briefly shine,
To those that cannot die.

So shall thy saddest hours be brief,
Thy bliss without alloy,
And flowers an emblem of thy grief,
The ivy of thy joy.

Then turn not from its russet bough,
Though dark may be its shade;
Its wreath is worthier of thy brow
Than flow'ret's brightest braid.

Mary thanked her mother, and said she hoped in time to notice the many different uses of plants and trees, as well as living things, since every increase of knowledge gave her an increase of pleasure. "And now, dear mamma," added she, "will you be so very good as to tell me who it was that so slily sent me those pretty verses last night. Ah! you smile. Now I know you are in the secret; though I have been thinking and guessing for a long time, and cannot find it out."

"Is it very important for you to know, Mary?"

"Not very, mamma; but I should value them much more if I knew who could take so much pains to please me."

"Well then, to set your curiosity at rest, I must be a betrayer of the secret entrusted to me."

"Oh! no, mamma, not if you promised not to tell; I would rather still feel curious about the matter, than ask you to do what I know to be wrong."

"But as I have made no such promise, Mary, I may venture to give my own conjecture on the subject. Arthur appeared to be so much pleased with the account you gave him after dinner, respecting our new acquaintances, the squirrels, that I fancy those lines came from the counting-house, whither your brother was obliged to attend papa on business during a part of the evening."

"I have no doubt of it now, mamma; and I might have known the hand-writing. It is so like my brother's kind desire to please,

that I shall not rest till I can thank him for it. But you said there was something more for me to hear about those pretty animals, mamma; and I have been thinking to ask you if the fur of the squirrel is not very useful. I remember aunt Sophia said her muff was made of squirrels' skins; but it was of a very different colour to those we saw in the pine-tree."

"Yes, my dear, those pretty little creatures are often pursued by man for the sake of their fur; but the muff you speak of was that of the American grey squirrel. There are several varieties of this animal, such as the black, brown, grey, white, &c.; most of which are very plentiful in the woods of America, where they are killed in great numbers, and their skins exported for sale to other countries."

"But, as they are so shy and timid,"

said Mary, "I should think it must be very difficult to come near enough to them to catch any."

"The ingenuity of man," replied her mother, "finds means to overcome every kind of agility and cunning practised by brutes for their preservation or escape. Even the noble lion and the ponderous elephant, which seem to be endued with a faculty superior to mere instinct, are subdued and rendered submissive to his will; it is no wonder then that he should entrap the smaller animals, when the love of gain urges him to the pursuit. Before we dismiss this subject, Mary, I will relate some particulars which I think will amuse you: they are so extraordinary, that I should doubt the truth of the account, were it not firmly attested by several highly creditable authors, among whom is the justly celebrated Linnæus.

"In Lapland, and the extensive forests of the north, squirrels are observed to change their place of abode, and to remove in vast numbers from one country to another. In these migrations, they may be seen by thousands travelling directly forward; while neither rocks, forests, nor even the broadest waters, can stop their progress."

"Can this be possible, mamma? I can easily fancy these nimble creatures climbing up rocks, and scrambling through the boughs of high trees; but in what way do such tiny creatures manage to cross even a gentle stream of water?"

"Be patient, love, and you shall hear. Their historian says, nothing can be more true than this: when these animals in their march meet with broad rivers, or extensive lakes, which abound in Lapland, they take a very curious method of crossing them.

Upon approaching the banks, and perceiving the breadth of the water, they return, as if by common consent, into the neighbouring forest, each in search of a piece of bark, which answers all the purpose of a boat to waft him over, and on which he sits very composedly. When the whole company are furnished in this manner, they boldly commit their little fleet to the waves, every squirrel sitting on its own piece of bark, and fanning the air with its bushy tail, to drive the little vessel to its destined port. In this orderly manner they will set forward, and frequently cross lakes several miles broad. But it often happens that these little four-footed mariners are not aware of the dangers they have to encounter; for, although the water mostly proves calm near the shore, in the middle it is always turbulent. In deep

water, the slightest gust of wind coming suddenly, oversets the little sailor and his vessel together. The whole navy of squirrels, that, but a few minutes before, rode proudly and securely along, is now overturned, and a shipwreck of two or three thousand sail ensues! This event, which is so disastrous for the little quadrupeds, becomes a favourable circumstance to the Laplanders on shore, who collect the dead bodies as they are thrown up by the waves, eat the flesh, and sell the skins for about one shilling a dozen."

"Poor little creatures!" cried Mary: "I shall long remember this story, because it is so curious; and as it is related by that good man Linnæus, I think it must be true, for he lived in Sweden, you know, and travelled into Lapland to find curious plants, where he no doubt saw the

fact. Yet I cannot help feeling very sorry that so many harmless creatures should thus find a watery grave."

"Yes, we may regret this circumstance, if we merely take into consideration the lives of these little animals; but, my dear Mary, all classes of creation are in some way dependent on each other; and, in order to maintain that general harmony that reigns throughout all the works of God, some of those beings must be sacrificed for the good of others. Thus we see that those animals that are most useful to man, are produced in such numbers as best suit his convenience; and that none of the smaller and more prolific sort may overrun the earth, or become burdensome to man, each kind is liable to accidents, and all have enemies that prey upon them. Perhaps, if this little fleet of squirrels were

to reach the other side of the lake in safety, there might not be provision enough for such vast numbers, and they would then perish miserably. We may therefore cease to regret the sudden sweeping away of a few hundreds of them, when we see how much their destruction benefits the poor Laplanders, who frequently suffer from a scarcity of provisions, as well as from being at times obliged to live nearly in a state of darkness."

"In darkness, mamma? dear, how forlorn! yet I have heard they love their own country so well, as to believe it superior to every other, and have no wish ever to leave it."

"That is indeed true, Mary. The Laplanders justly and wisely set a full value on the comforts they possess, and are so habituated to what we should look upon as

a state of suffering and privation, that they have no idea any thing is wanting to complete their happiness. When we consider the total want of daylight for seven weeks together—frequently a scarcity of provisions—and that it is no unusual thing for a person's lips to be frozen to the cup when attempting to drink; a European, surrounded by so many luxuries, may indeed regard their lot as a forlorn one. I am, however, disposed to view it in a very different light: from all that we have heard, the Laplanders appear humble, contented, attached to their native soil, and so truly hospitable to strangers, that they must possess some of the best traits and affections of human nature. In my opinion, the inhabitants of Lapland are entitled to our respect rather than our pity. Shall I read to you, as we walk along, a story in

verse relating to this subject? It was written by a kind friend of ours, for the amusement of a little girl whom he loves; and I think, by that time, we shall reach the end of our walk."

"Oh yes, dear mamma, if you please: I will be all attention, and very much obliged for your kindness."

Mrs. Gray then drew the arm of her little daughter within her own, and read the following poem, entitled,

THE LAPLANDER.

A hardy, though a grey-hair'd sire,
Was seated by a cottage fire,
A youngling on his knee;
His youngest daughter's laughing child,
Whose ready ear his tales beguiled
Of lands beyond the sea.

For he, from boyhood wont to brave
The howling blast and whitening wave,
Had sail'd a mariner;

Had mix'd with Swede, and Russ, and Dane,
And trod the bleak and barren plain
Where dwells the Laplander.

And now he told the little maid
Who listened to him, half afraid,
Of six long weeks of night,
When the sun neither set nor rose,
But wrapt in deep and drifted snows,
All round was cold and white.

He told her, too, how poor their food,
Their huts or tents how mean and rude;
Till, with a tearful eye,
The child exclaim'd, "Oh! say no more!
Rather than live on Lapland's shore,
'Twere better sure to die!"

"Nay, nay, my little maid," he said,
"For them a tear you need not shed,
Nor deem their lot forlorn;
For God, compassionate and kind,
Tempers, you know, the piercing wind
Unto the lamb new-shorn.

"And He so gives both good and ill
Unto all human kind, that still
In north, south, east, and west,

Each one may find what he has sent
Enough, with patience and content,
To make existence blest.

" The stormy blasts and sunless sky,
The drifted snows, which, far and nigh,
They see around them spread;
The shapeless garb, and scanty fare,
And—all the home they have to share,
The rough and lonely shed;—

" Such are no hardships unto those
Who, rock'd by winds, and wrapt in snows,
Have long accustom'd been
To winter in its roughest forms,
And find their land of sleet and storms,
A fond, familiar scene.

" It is their HOME! and in that word
All that can make a spot preferr'd,
And loved by eye and heart,
All dear to parent and to child,
That makes an Eden in the wild,
In that brief word have part.

" In truth, their lot is not so bad,
For they in skins and furs are clad,
Which suit their climate drear;

And if their diet be but mean,
But few among them e'er have seen
Or tasted better cheer.

" Whirl'd in their sledges, on they go
O'er wilds and wastes of frozen snow
With glee, and far more speed
Than you, my love, can ever trip,
When in blithe Spring, with jump and skip,
You cross the daisied mead.

" And lovely is the long, long night
Of Lapland, beautiful and bright!
Worth going there to see;
And buoyant is the burst of spring,
When flowers come forth, and wild birds sing
On many a bush and tree.

" Then think not wretched is the case
Of this brave, simple, humble race;
But bless and praise His name,
Who, in His wisdom and His will,
Affords to all His creatures still
The help their need may claim."

Glad was the child! no more she said,
But kiss'd her grandsire, went to bed,
And dream'd the livelong night,

That, seated on her grandsire's knee,
In a nice sledge, and full of glee,
Fur-clad, as warm as warm could be,
They sped their rapid flight.

Barton.

CHAPTER IV.

"How dear the joy! to welcome home
One who, on many a foreign shore,
Has long and far been doom'd to roam,
By absence but endear'd the more!
How sweet to hear and ponder o'er
Long tales of all that charm'd his sight,
And gather from the Traveller's store
Both information and delight!"

For some days nothing material occurred that was worthy of notice. Mary attended regularly to her studies, and played afterwards with as much vivacity as usual. She had made her dolls some new dresses for

the summer, and found much innocent enjoyment in decorating them to her taste, and in taking them out by turns for a walk in the garden.

One day, when the family met at dinner, Mary thought her papa looked more than usually pleased, and several times she fancied he was about to say something to her. Dinner, however, passed on in quiet, and the cloth was removed. Mary had almost forgotten that her attention had been excited, when her father said:

"Come hither, my little pet: I have good news to tell. Your kind uncle, whom you loved so tenderly when he was last in England, is returned from a long voyage, and we may hope to see him here this evening."

"Oh! my dear papa," exclaimed Mary, "how happy you make me! how I shall

long for the evening to arrive! I well remember my uncle's kindness, and the amusing stories he would tell me of people he had met in his travels. When did you hear he was come home again?"

"I found a letter waiting at Morton when I went to market this morning," replied her father; "but delayed telling you the contents, lest the agreeable surprise should deprive my little darling of her accustomed appetite. And now, love, as it is rather late, I would advise you to attend to some little employment with mamma, that nothing may lessen the pleasure you have in store."

Mary took her father's advice, and very cheerfully skipped away for her work-box, that she might finish a collar that was begun the day before for her brother Arthur. She sat down diligently to work, and

had the pleasure to find her task completed before tea-time. The contents of her work-box were then properly arranged, and her books put by in their allotted places, that no little marks of disorder might remind her of duties unfulfilled.

Mary had profited by her mother's example and instructions; she had also read an excellent little book, called "Order and Disorder," in which the advantages of one, and the disadvantages of the other, are so pleasingly pointed out, that I cordially wish to recommend it to the notice of all my young friends; assured that they may find in it not only something new, but something to please, and something to instruct, which is the desirable end of all our reading.

At length came the much-desired evening; and with it, to Mary's great satisfac-

tion, came her beloved uncle. She had been watching for some time at the window, and when the sound of wheels was heard drawing towards the house, her patience could hold out no longer, but away she went with her very nimblest step to the hall-door, to welcome, with affectionate greetings, her mother's brother.

The meeting appeared to be mutually agreeable to all parties. Captain Seymour was glad to find himself once more enjoying the comforts of an English home in the company of those he loved; and his relations, on their part, rejoiced to welcome him on shore after the perils of a long sea-voyage. Some time was spent in cheerful conversation, till Mary's drooping eye-lids bespoke her need of sleep; and, at her mother's request, she rose from her seat, took leave of the party, and retired to rest.

CHAPTER V.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

Wordsworth.

THE following morning Mary awoke earlier than usual, and entered the breakfast-parlour to wait the arrival of the social morning meal. She found her uncle already there, busily employed in unpacking a large case that lay upon the floor; and, going up to him, enquired kindly about his health. The captain kissed his little niece

affectionately, saying her happy countenance would soon make him forget all his toils; and he hoped mamma would now and then allow them a good game of play, as formerly; though he plainly saw, by her improved appearance, that her pursuits were generally of a more important nature than mere play and amusement. He then proposed to take a turn with her in the garden for a while, where the fresh morning air would give them a better relish for tea and toast. Here they found every thing looking gay and smiling. The sun shone with a delightful splendour; numerous birds were straining their little throats in joyful harmony; while the very leaves and blossoms seemed to start into new beauty to hail the brightness of spring. Mary felt her little heart glow with pleasure. She remembered that all she saw,

and all the blessings she possessed, were the works and gifts of her Almighty Father; and feelings of humble gratitude passed through her young mind as she walked quietly by the side of her uncle, who seemed also much impressed by the beauty of the scene around them.

"What a charming retreat is a flower-garden!" said he; "and how many lovely productions of nature are here adorning the dull brown earth! Do you not admire the beautiful variety of flowers, my love?"

Mary assured her uncle she had great pleasure in cultivating as many as her little garden could well contain, and begged he would turn with her down the next walk to see the spot she preferred to all the rest of the garden; because she was allowed to call it her own, and to dig, sow, or plant, as best suited her inclination.

She thought it had never looked more inviting than now. The morning sun shone full upon every little tuft of blossoms, and set them off to the best advantage. Some double violets had peeped out since yesterday, and a border of ranunculus-daisies, blending a profusion of crimson-tipped buds, with their bright green leaves, formed a hedge to the little enclosure, which any tiny-footed lass might have easily overstepped.

"Ah! my poor hyacinths," said Mary, "they are all faded; but there will soon be roses and sweet-peas. See how they already twine up the sticks! and the mignionette has some blossoms upon it, and smells very sweetly. The bees have found it out, and are buzzing about it so merrily, that I should think they find more sweets among its flowers than the lilacs or laburnums."

"That is no doubt the case, my dear. These little insects soon discover the plants best adapted to furnish them with materials for building their cells, and for storing them with honey when completed. The lilac may probably be one of their favourite resorts, while its flowers are fresh and glowing; but it is worthy of remark, that they instinctively shun the laburnum, notwithstanding it is covered with clusters of drooping blossoms, rich as burnished gold. The leaves and bark are found to be poisonous to human beings, though eaten greedily by hares and rabbits; and I have heard of more than one instance, in which children have narrowly escaped death from eating the seeds of the laburnum. Be therefore, my dear child, very careful to avoid putting any part of this shrub into your mouth; for painful consequences

might arise fom it. You look surprised, Mary, that so fine a shrub should have these pernicious qualities; but I assure you it is true. There are many beautiful plants, both wild and cultivated, which possess poisonous juices, and among these are the laurel and mezereon. Nevertheless, their berries are eagerly sought for by some kinds of birds, particularly finches, that feed on them without experiencing any ill effects."

"How is it, uncle," asked Mary, "that the flowers in our woods and fields are less beautiful, and much paler in colour than those which grow in gardens? I love to run about and gather wild flowers, but I cannot find any so full and double as are to be met with in our flower-beds."

"Some of our own native plants, that

grow wild," replied he, "have, by care and cultivation, been so much improved, as to merit a place in our parterres; but by far the greater part of the flowers that adorn our gardens have been brought to us from distant parts of the world, most of them from those countries bordering on the Levant. The inhabitants of the east, and particularly the Turks, were the first people who cultivated a variety of flowers for ornament and pleasure. From their gardens, therefore, have been procured most of those which decorate ours; and especially the tulip, which grows wild in the Levant, as well as the narcissus and hyacinth. Greece abounds also with the latter flowers; and they have so remarkably fragrant a smell, that when great numbers of them are in full bloom, it is so powerful as to be hurtful to those not accustomed to it.

"This is the season, my sweet Mary, when we ought to walk abroad and survey the gladness of Nature, that seems, as it were, to wake fresh from sleep. In winter, earth looks desolate and dark—the trees are leafless—the whole country bare—but no sooner does cheerful spring make its appearance, than the sap begins to flow in the branches; green buds shoot forth; and the earth, feeling the warm rays of the sun, is soon clothed with a mantle of the liveliest hue. Can any thing be more beautiful than the scene around us? Fields decked in verdant green; meadows sprinkled with many a party-coloured flower, trees shooting forth delicate young twigs; earth yielding up its abundance for the benefit of man—all serve to show the wonder-working hand of Providence, and ought to elevate the heart in praise of its Creator.

Look through yonder hedge, and see the young lambs, how they frisk upon the grass, skipping around in playful gambols; while the merry antics of the cattle also show their gladness, and reproach man for being discontented and sad. Let us then partake of this universal joy; and remember, that he who is of a contented spirit knows no want, nor has he any thing on this earth left to ask for."

At this moment a servant came to say her mistress waited breakfast. They quickly returned, therefore, to the house, in order to join the rest of the family, who were about taking their seats at the table. A nice basin of bread and milk was placed for Mary, who welcomed it with satisfaction. The morning air had produced that best of all seasoning, a healthy appetite; and her spirits were in happy

unison with all around. Her cheeks glowed with health, and her eyes sparkled with animation while she placed herself before it.

CHAPTER VI.

After breakfast was over, the conversation turned upon the different countries that Captain Seymour had visited during his last voyage. He had lately been to the West Indies and to Mexico; and Mrs. Gray being curious to learn some particulars about the latter country, made many enquiries respecting it.

"I shall be happy to give you all the information in my power," said he; "and will therefore, if you please, read some

extracts from the notes I made while journeying along, as they will convey to you a better and clearer idea of the places than my memory will now furnish me with, being written on the spot at the time I was there.

" Mexico is the finest country imaginable, and abounds with animals and insects of every variety and beauty. It is impossible to witness them sporting on the borders of the magnificent rivers, without feeling a mixture of delight and wonder. On rowing up the streams at night, in our boats, the sound of the oars frequently roused large cranes, herons, and innumerable other great birds, from their resting-places; while countless thousands of fire-flies were flitting among the dark trees, which dipped their closely-woven branches into the water.

"So beautiful does this country appear, that on first arriving, a stranger is tempted to suppose that he will feel no inclination ever to quit it. But as he becomes acquainted with the half-civilized state of the inhabitants—the baleful passions that they cherished—the utter want of religion and of good government, as a nation, he changes his opinions; and the remembrance of distant home, and its enjoyments, recals many a wanderer, while roaming among scenes of grandeur and beauty, which his native land does not possess. Besides these considerations, in places where the most beautiful objects prevail, there are generally found some which strike terror or disgust into the mind of the traveller; and others which annoy him by their vexatious stings and bites.

"I and my companions frequently loitered by the sides of the rivers, and scrambled up the deeply-wooded banks, to admire the splendid hues of the birds. Among these, the fine rose-coloured spoon-bills, surrounded by clusters of little ones, of a bright *pink;* and the pure white down of the young cranes—all as large as our barn-door fowls—offered the most beautiful contrast imaginable to the dark shining green leaves amongst which they were sheltered. We were often startled by the calandria, a large bird, that would suddenly dart before us, displaying in its plumage the contrast of the brightest orange-colour to the darkest jet. The beautiful cardinal too, all red even to the hue of its bill, charmed us from some neighhouring bush, as much by its note as the splendour of its feathers. In addition to these lovely creatures, I

might enumerate an infinite variety of others, scarcely inferior to them in beauty; but it would be vain to attempt describing them, as well as the endless and gaudy variety of butterflies that floated in the air around us. Yet the most brilliant of them did not surpass a large species of dragon-fly, some of which had a yellow, some an azure spot, at the tip of each of their four wings. The texture of the wings being transparent, these colours, when the insect is in quick motion, are the only part visible; and, playing round the body, have a very singular effect.

"In some places there were also many parrots, of various kinds: one, a small green species, with crimson on the top of the head and around the bill, I bought for about two shillings of English money; but it speedily made its escape. At another

time I gave two dollars for a couple of young parrots, of the species called loro; green like the former one, but larger, and having a bright orange-colour on the crest and throat, instead of crimson. Thousands of both kinds were continually flying and screaming around us among the palm-trees, through which we were at that time travelling, and in which they build their nests.

"But the pleasure we derived from these lovely objects was not unmixed with fear. On the woody banks of the rivers was frequently seen the cayman or alligator, lurking for his prey. This is a very savage and powerful animal, living both by land and water. Its practice is to float upon the surface of rivers, and seize whatever animals come within its reach. When disappointed of fishy prey, it goes closer

to the bank, and there waits, covered up with sedges and grass, in patient expectation of some land-animal coming to drink, or of birds flying down incautiously from the trees. Nothing is to be seen of the artful destroyer till the poor animal approaches; nor is its retreat discovered till it is too late for safety. It seizes its prey by springing upon it with instant swiftness; secures it with teeth and claws; and at once drags it to the bottom. They are also found, in some places, lying for hours together in the sun, and motionless: so that one not used to them might mistake their bodies for trunks of trees, covered with a rough and dry bark; but the mistake would be a fatal one if not prevented. Instances have been known of canoes being overset by them, and the poor Indians dragged out and devoured.

"Among the very worst of our foes, I must name the mosquitoes and sand-flies, whose attacks, depriving their victim of his nightly rest, are often the primary causes of fevers. The latter swarmed in such countless numbers, there was no escaping from them; and they are still more distressing than the mosquitoes, being so very small as scarcely to be seen till the eye is directed to the part on which they settle by the keenness of their bite. They even creep under the skin, causing dreadful wounds, especially on the hands and feet.

"The inhabitants of the villages were in general rough, rude, and inhospitable; and their habitations afforded us very poor accommodations, when they could be prevailed upon to take us in. At one place, called Mexatlan, we were obliged to lay our

heads in a ruined cattle-shed, with little covering left overhead, and plenty of mud beneath. Here we found numerous visitants, whose company we could have gladly spared; these were multitudes of a little winged insect, which I never met with elsewhere. It seemed a very diminutive beetle, not much larger than a flea, and black in colour; which burying half its body in the flesh, left a blackish mark that was painful for days after. In this situation the only pleasing or consoling circumstance was, the natural beauty of the spot. We were surrounded by orange and lime-trees, of every different species; and above all, the lofty citron-tree, whose fruit had then acquired that magnificent size, and pale golden colour, which entitle it the

'Fairest of fruit.'

"But we will now dismiss this disagreeable part of our adventures, and proceed to examine the contents of our packing-cases, part of which I have brought home as a present to a little stay-at-home traveller; that is to say, one who is content to sit by her mamma and read accounts of other lands, that have been written by those who have braved all dangers to visit them. Here is something, dear Mary, which I think will gratify you."

Her uncle then drew carefully out a square box, fronted with glass, in which were a great many little stuffed birds. Some were sitting on twigs, placed for them like branches of trees; others, supported by invisible wires, seemed flying to meet their companions; while a few were guarding their nests—but all so tiny and so very beautiful, that Mary knew not

which to admire the most. After standing some time in silent admiration, she turned to her kind friend with delight and gratitude sparkling in her countenance, and begged to know what these lovely and brilliantly-coloured birds were called, never having seen any like them before.

Her uncle told her they were humming-birds, of which there are many varieties to be found in tropical climates; though it is no easy matter to procure and stuff such delicate creatures, so as to preserve their beauty and their graceful form. "I have seen upwards of a hundred different sorts," said he, "and further study has brought some naturalists acquainted with many more. If you wish to know any thing about them, Mary, beyond what you see in the glass-case, I will relate some observations that I made while in Jamaica;

which is, you know, one of the West India islands. We staid there a few weeks, on our passage; and I was often highly entertained by watching the habits of these sparkling little creatures: and my notes, made for the purpose of communicating a share of pleasure to my distant friends, will furnish us also with a history of my acquaintanee with humming-birds. There is not, I may truly say, in all the varied works of nature, any family that can bear a comparison for singularity of form, splendour of colour, or number and variety of species, with this, the smallest of the feathered creation. In Jamaica I procured the smallest ever known, which is considerably less than some of the bees, and yet, in every respect, a perfect bird; and in Mexico many new species have been discovered, whose splendid colours glow with

a brilliancy and lustre not surpassed by any with which we have been previously acquainted.

"The first I saw alive of these minute creatures was in the yard of a house at Kingston, in Jamaica. He had taken his station on the twig of a large tamarind-tree: there, quite indifferent to the number of persons constantly passing near, he spent most of the day. The tree had but few blossoms, and I could watch his motions with perfect freedom. So self-important did this little bird appear, that he pertinaciously kept entire possession of the bough; for the moment any other bird, though ten times larger than himself, approached his tree, he attacked it most furiously and drove it off, always returning to the same twig he had before occupied. I often drew near to observe, with pleasure,

his tiny operation of dressing and pluming, and to listen to his weak, simple, and frequently-repeated note. It would have been easy to catch him; but I felt unwilling to destroy so interesting a visitant, who had afforded me so much enjoyment. In my excursions around Kingston, I procured many of the same species, as well as the long-tailed, black, &c.; among others was the one I have mentioned as the smallest in size yet described, but which has the finest voice of any."

"Is their song very sweet?" asked Mary—"as sweet and as loud as that of the little wren that had a nest in our plum-tree last summer?"

"I am not quite sure that these birds have any continued note," said her uncle, "that may properly be termed a song; but all that I have heard make a tremulous and

interrupted chirping, which, with the humming sound produced by the rapid motion of their wings in the air, forms a pleasant melody. I spent some agreeable hours in the place that had once been the Botanical Gardens of Jamaica; and on the various trees, growing to an unusual size there, met with many curious birds. Among them, the smallest specimen of humming-birds was frequently perched on the highest branch of the bread-fruit or cabbage-tree, where he would pour forth his light, querulous note, in apparent gaiety of heart.

"But it is not at all seasons of the year that these little creatures are found equally numerous. On my arrival near the capital of Mexico, scarcely one was to be seen; but in the succeeding months of May and June they resorted, in great numbers, to a

garden in the centre of the city; and by offering a reward to the Indians, many were brought to me alive. At one time I had nearly seventy of them in cages, which, with attention and care, lived with me for some weeks; and could I have devoted my whole attention to them, I have no doubt it would have been possible to bring them alive to Europe."

"They did not try to escape then?" said Mrs. Gray. "I should fear they would beat their beautiful little wings to pieces against the cage, as they are so delicate, and had always been accustomed to fly where they liked."

"I have heard accounts," continued Captain Seymour, "of these birds being so fierce and untameable, as to beat themselves to death when confined; but I believe they are untrue—no bird appears

more easily reconciled to its new situation. It is certain they are seldom off the wing; but I never saw them attempt to beat themselves against the wires of the cage, nor the glass of a window. They would remain, as it were, suspended in the air, in a space barely sufficient for them to move their wings; and the humming sounds proceed entirely from the surprising quickness with which they perform that motion; and what is very remarkable, they will keep their bodies in the air, apparently motionless, for hours together."

"May I ask what you fed them with, uncle? I suppose they could not eat seed like our canary-bird."

"No, my dear; I placed in each cage a small china cup, half filled with sugar and water, of the consistence of a thick syrup: in this, various flowers were inserted, prin-

cipally the yellow, bell-shaped corolla of the great aloe; the end of which, next the stem, being cut off, permitted the liquid to flow into the flower, into which my little prisoners were constantly inserting their long bifid tongues, and drawing up its luscious contents. This operation, like most of the actions of the bird, was generally performed on the wing; but they sometimes alighted on the flowers, perching against its sides in an upright position, and pumping up its mucilaginous liquid. You look surprised, Mary, that sugar and water should have afforded sufficient nutriment for the support of their little bodies, as it appears to contain no solid matter. I think it very probable, however, that all the different kinds of humming-birds feed on insects: numbers of them, I am certain, do so, having often watched them attentively, while

sporting in the open air in pursuit of their minute prey.

"Almost every flower of the tropical climates contains insects of one kind or other. Now, the humming-bird is most busy about the flowers for an hour or two after sunrise, and after a shower of rain; and it is just at these times that the insects come out to the edge of the flower, in order that the sun's rays may dry the nightly dew or rain that they may have received. While I resided at Themiscaltepéc, I spent much time out of doors in a garden, where stood a pomegranate-tree, in full blossom. Amongst these flowers the little creatures were continually flitting about; and I observed one of them to take entire possession of a large branch, where he sat the whole day, catching the small flies that came to the flowers. There is little doubt that,

with a supply of insects, as well as syrup, honey, &c. they might be long kept alive in large cages: those in which I made my experiment were by far too small for the purpose.

" While the humming-birds are in a state of nature, their dispositions seem to resemble that of the robin and some other birds of Europe ; for they will violently resent any intrusion made on their dominions by any of their own species. Yet I was much amused and delighted to observe, that among my little feathered captives, though several different kinds were confined together, there never appeared the least inclination in any of them to quarrel. You would have smiled, by dear little girl, to see the unwarrantable liberties that the smaller birds would sometimes take with those of five times their size and strength.

I said my cages were smaller than they ought to have been, which occasioned some inconvenience to the little inmates. Thus the perch has been sometimes occupied by several of the blue-throated humming-birds, when that tiny creature called the Mexican Star, seeking in vain for a vacant spot, would seat itself, without ceremony, on the long beak of the former, and remain perched on it for some minutes; while its supporter never once offered to resent the insult.

"About this time, business required me to reside for several weeks at Xalappa. The house where I lived was only one story high, enclosing, as most of the Spanish houses do there, a small garden in the centre; that is, it was built in a quadrangular form, around a square, cultivated piece of ground. To shade the house, and

protect its inmates from the scorching sun of that climate, the roof is made to project six or seven feet from the walls like a veranda. This covers a walk all round, leaving a small space only between the edges of the tiles and the trees which grow in the centre of the garden. From the extremity of these tiles to the branches of the trees, numerous spiders had spread their ensnaring webs so closely and compactly, that they resembled a net. Here was a fresh subject of observation for me: my attention was again excited, and I could never be weary of watching the habits of my little favourites. Nothing could be more amusing than to see the cautious peregrinations of these birds, among those endless labyrinths. Their love for insects induced them to advance beneath the web, and enter the cells and most intricate pas-

sages in search of flies entangled among them; but, as the larger spiders did not tamely surrender their booty, the invader was often compelled to retreat. Sitting at my window, within a few feet of this scene of action, I often observed all their evolutions with great precision. The active little bird generally passed once or twice round the court, as if cautiously to examine the ground. He then commenced his attack by going carefully under the nets of the wily insect, and seizing by surprise the smallest entangled flies, or those that were most feeble. In again ascending from the angular traps of the spiders, great care and skill were required. Sometimes there was scarcely room for his little wings to perform their office, and the least deviation would have involved his beautiful form in the tangling meshes of his adversary, and

caused his ruin. It was only the works of the smaller kinds of spiders that these birds dared to attack; the larger ones rose to the defence of their citadels, when the lovely besieger would suddenly shoot off like a sunbeam, and could only be traced by the luminous glow of his resplendent colours."

"You must allow us to thank you most cordially," said Mrs. Gray, "for this interesting history, and especially for so valuable an addition to our curiosities as these transatlantic beauties will prove. But I fear the brilliancy of their plumage will quite eclipse our kingfishers and jays, of which we have been so proud."

"If only the stuffed remains of these little feathered gems excite so much admiration, sister," replied he, "how would you have been charmed to examine their beautiful appearance while living! But

those who have been accustomed to witness them, as I have done, sporting about with the rapidity of lightning, their breasts glowing with all the brilliancy of the ruby, their moving crests, throats, and tails, more glittering than the peacock in the sun, can never look with pleasure on these mutilated forms. The humming-bird may truly be called the Bird of Paradise; and, had it existed in the old world, it would doubtless have claimed that title instead of the bird which has now the honour to bear it. See it darting through the air, almost as quickly as a glance of the mind! Now it is within a yard of your face—in an instant it is gone! Now it flutters from flower to flower, to sip the nectarian dew; it is now a ruby—now a topaz—now an emerald—now all burnished gold! But no description can give you a better idea of it than

the one already written so elegantly by Buffon.

"On one of the twigs in the box Mary will find a specimen of their nests, which are usually constructed very neatly of cotton or thistle-down, to which is fastened, by some glutinous substance, a white flat lichen, resembling that which is so common in England. The female lays two eggs, about the size of peas, which are hatched in three weeks, by the male and female sitting alternately. While they are attending their young, nothing can exceed the fierceness of these little creatures, if one of their own species should dare to invade their territories. With wings expanded, and throats swelling with rage, they fight in the air, uttering a shrill noise, till one of the combatants falls exhausted to the ground. Indeed, they will attack every

bird indiscriminately that approaches the nest. Their flight is as rapid as an arrow; and as they dart at the eyes of the larger birds, their sharp, needle-like bill, is a truly formidable weapon in this kind of warfare. Their posture, in sleeping, is not less curious than their other habits; for they frequently suspend themselves by the feet, hanging from the boughs with their heads downwards. This, I believe, is not the case with any European bird, but it is by no means uncommon with the parrot tribe, many of them sleeping in the same manner.

"I believe we must now take our leave of these interesting little creatures, for here ends my acquaintance with them. Business obliges me now to claim leave of absence for a few hours, which I am sure you will kindly excuse; but I hope to

meet you all again in the evening. Mary's thoughts will, I have no doubt, be much engaged by her new favourites; I shall therefore leave her an employment which will confine them for some time to the same subject, and, on my return, she will tell me how she likes the contents of this folded paper, that has occupied a snug corner in my pocket-book. So now fetch me my hat, little fairy, and take a farewell kiss, for I must hasten to Morton, to meet a gentleman there."

As soon as Mary found her uncle was departed, she opened and read the sheet of paper, which contained the following address.

TO THE HUMMING-BIRD.

Tiniest of the feather'd race,
Full of beauty and of grace;
Tales which I have heard of thee,
Almost seem like dreams to me.

When I see the wren so small,
Hopping on my garden wall,
Wondrous seems it there should be
Yet a smaller bird than he.

But in sunnier climes than ours,
Humming round the honied flowers,
Distant travellers tell of thee,
Busy as the "Busy bee!"

There thy little slender beak
Balmy sweets delights to seek;
While thy restless pinions' sound
Wakes continual music round.

Sometimes, like a winged gem,
Hovering o'er a flow'ret's stem,
Glowing in the sunshine bright,
Like a painted beam of light!

Then, as quick as sunny ray,
Vanishing from sight away;
Thus my fancy would describe
Thee, the smallest of thy tribe.

But not only as a toy
Shouldst thou Fancy's dreams employ;
He who form'd and fashion'd thee,
Made the earth, and air, and sea.

Not the lion in his might,
Nor the eagle in his flight,
Nor the great leviathan,
Though gigantic be their span;

Prouder proof of GOD can give,
Than thy form diminutive;
Or in Meditation's hour,
More display HIS love and power!

B. Barton.

Mary's mother now reminded her that the usual occupations of the day should not be forgotten, and recommended her to place her birds on a secure part of the table in the drawing-room, and to commit the poetry to memory, while she retired for a while to give some orders to her servants, and to inspect some household concerns. On these occasions Mary frequently attended her mother, and endeavoured to make herself useful, by fetching and carrying many little articles for her. She did not

however ask, on the present occasion, to leave the room, but, sitting down contentedly to the task assigned her, continued her employment with much assiduity. Her obedience was well rewarded; for in about an hour her mother returned and said: "You may put on your bonnet and tippet, dear girl, and accompany me to the farm, whither I am going on a little business with the farmer's wife."

This proposal was highly agreeable to our little friend, who immediately ran to make ready. She was a great favourite with Mrs. Tindal at the farm, and was always delighted to visit her poultry-yard and pretty garden, where she had frequently been treated with the first strawberry of the season, picked on purpose for her.

CHAPTER VII.

"COME, dear Mary," said her mother, in an animated voice, as she descended the stairs, "let us set out without further delay: we shall not find too much time on our hands this morning."

The little girl did not require to be twice called; she came forward immediately, and slipping her hand within that of her mother, walked cheerfully along. They had soon passed through the garden, and down the avenue of lime-trees, entering a

footpath that led through some beautiful meadows to the farm. All at once the sound of *cuckoo*, *cuckoo*, saluted their ears, proceeding from a bird about the size of a thrush, that was flying over their heads.

"Hark! dear mother," cried Mary, "there is the cuckoo, or, as you would call it, the 'Herald of Spring:' its note reminds me of that long poem you read to me the other day. I have learned it since, mamma, and will repeat it to you, if you please."

"I can have no objection to such a proposal, my dear, and shall be glad to have so pleasing a proof of your application. Begin slowly, and pay attention to the subject."

Mary recollected herself for a minute, and then began.

AN ADDRESS TO THE CUCKOO.

Herald of spring,
Who lov'st to fling
Thy two brief notes around;
Though changeless still
The ear they fill,
There's music in the sound.

For thou and they,
With flow'ret's gay,
And bursting leaves, come forth;
As if to tell
Spring's joyous spell
Was come to gladden earth.

A joyful bird,
Though 'tis averr'd
No parent joys are thine;
At least, thy lot
Permits thee not
With parent griefs to pine.

Linnet and thrush,
On tree and bush
We know will sit and sing;

Larks too, we see,
Upsoaring free,
And warbling on the wing.

But thou unseen,
In woodlands green,
Though all thy voice have heard,
In depths unknown
Repeat'st thy tone,
A solitary bird.

Mocking the sight
On left and right,
Before us and behind,
Distinct and clear
Thy notes we hear,
Borne by the passing wind.

Like echo's close
Thy music flows,
And bids our hearts rejoice,
Till thou art brought
To Fancy's thought
As but a wandering voice!*

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* O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

Wordsworth.

Cuckoo, Cuckoo,
O tell me who
Thy song can coldly greet?
The very child,
By thee beguil'd,
Thy numbers will repeat.

The school-boy's ear
Delights to hear
Those notes: —he looks for thee;
But looks in vain;
And then thy strain
He shouts with boyish glee.

E'en hoary age,
In life's last stage,
Some spring-like thoughts may share;
And hear and feel
Thy merry peal
Float by him through the air.

But most of all,
Thy annual call
Should glad the poet's heart;
And animate,
With hopes elate,
To act a kindred part.

Far from the throng
Like thine his song
Should pour enjoyment round;
Till all who heard
Its music, stirr'd,
Should bless the blythesome sound.

And he, like thee,
With thoughts of glee,
The listener's heart should cheer;
Hid from the eye,
Or far or nigh,
But grateful to the ear.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Then tell me who
Unmov'd can hear thee sing?
For oh! thy song,
The woods among,
Is but the voice of spring.

Barton.

"Thank you, dearest," returned Mrs. Gray: "shall I tell you why the cuckoo never enjoys the pleasure of tending her offspring as other birds do?"

"Yes, please, mamma: surely she does not leave her eggs as the ostrich is said to do, to be hatched in the sand by the heat of the sun."

"Not exactly so, my love; though I believe that is quite an erroneous account of the ostrich: some travellers have of late ascertained that this bird is a very careful mother, and hatches her own eggs. But the cuckoo does not build a nest: she watches an opportunity when some little feathered neighbour is absent from her nest, and deposits one egg in it, which she leaves under her maternal care. Some people are of opinion that the cuckoo sucks all the eggs she finds in the nest when she deposits her own there; others say that she leaves them unmolested, and the unsuspecting mother-bird sits patiently till they are all hatched, when she and her

mate feed them with assiduity. The young cuckoo, however, being a very voracious creature, requires a vast deal of food, and the poor little cheated birds, who cannot distinguish the intruder from their own offspring, have to work very hard to supply his wants. I am inclined to think the latter supposition is correct; for one summer, while I was on a visit in the country, I saw a young cuckoo fostered in the nest of a hedge-sparrow, where I suppose it had been hatched with her own young ones.* The farm-house boy had discovered the nest near the orchard, and, to his surprise, found an ill-looking speckled bird with the young sparrows, that were continually gaping and calling for food. Not knowing what this strange creature could be, he left the nest in the hedge, and mentioned the

* A fact, which fell under the writer's knowledge.

circumstance to the family; who conjectured it to be a cuckoo, which indeed it proved. As this occurrence was a very rare one, we determined to preserve the nest in its place, and watch the progress of the young stranger, who was fed very tenderly by the hedge-sparrow. For some days he appeared to share very passively with the young sparrows; but as he increased in size very rapidly, he found himself cramped for room, and most ungraciously requited the kindness he daily received, by unceremoniously turning out first one and then another of his foster brethren, till he had the whole nest to himself, and the poor little birds falling from some height, were all killed.

"Oh! that was very unamiable," said Mary; "but pray, mamma, what became of the cuckoo at last?"

"We continued our daily visits to him, my dear, till at length he became nearly fledged, and I suppose flew away, to pursue his natural vocation and habits."

"Does the cuckoo lay its egg in any bird's nest it may chance to find, or does it always choose that of the hedge-sparrow?"

"No, my love, this bird does not deposit its progeny indiscriminately in any nest it may meet with; but, by a nice instinct peculiar to itself, chooses that of some bird whose natural choice of food resembles its own. It appears hardly possible that a soft-billed bird should be able to subsist on the same food with the hard-billed, as their stomachs are formed in a manner totally different, and only adapted to digest the food peculiar to each. Under this conclusion we may feel assured that

the cuckoo, which belongs to the former class, selects the nest of some bird that belongs also to it, in order that its young one may be fed according to its nature. Cuckoos feed solely upon insects; and from all the enquiry that I have been able to make, it appears that the young of that bird has only been found in the nests of the wagtail, hedge-sparrow, titlark, white-throat, and redbreast—all soft-billed, insectiverous birds, or such as live on insects.

"To suppose that cuckoos drop their eggs, as it were, by chance, in any nest, is so contrary to that maternal affection which is one of the first great dictates of nature, and such a violation of instinct, that I think no one, who has made observations on such a subject, can give credit to it. Be assured, my child, there is no object in nature, however small, that does not wel!

repay our most diligent search and attention. The more we see of the wonderful workings of *instinct*, the more evident is the beautiful harmony that reigns throughout the works of creation. Instinct has been defined to be 'that secret influence by which every species is impelled naturally to pursue, at all times, the same way and track without any teaching or example.' With some little qualification, I think this may be said to be correct; but there are instances in which even this faculty is known to vary, when place or circumstance presents any obstacles to it.

"It has been remarked, that every species of bird has a mode of building its nest peculiar to itself; so that any school-boy, having a nest shown to him, would at once pronounce what kind of bird it belonged to. This is, I believe, precisely the case among

fields, and woods, and wilds; but in the neighbourhood of towns, and in the villages round London, where mosses and gossamer, and the cotton-down of vegetables are hardly to be found, the nest of the chaffinch has not that elegant, finished appearance, nor is it so beautifully studded with moss and lichens, as when found in a more rural district. Your little favourite, the wren, is obliged, in such cases, to content itself with straws and dried grasses to construct its nest with, which cannot be worked up into that nice round and compact form for which the nest of this little architect is so remarkable, where it can obtain plenty of moss and twigs."

"But I suppose they make them as nearly like what they should be as possible, mamma. I remember how beautiful that chaffinch's nest was that Arthur found last

year in the shrubbery, and which you allowed us to take after the young ones were flown: it was as round as a tea-cup, and so delicately woven, that one could hardly believe a little bird had made it."

"It was curiously formed indeed, my dear. There is much in a common bird's nest to excite our surprise, and it is a subject that has been justly deemed worthy of attention by lovers of nature. Poets and painters unite in admiring the compact workmanship completed by so minute a creature as a bird; and Hurdis has, as you no doubt remember, contrived to express, in a few short lines, what could not have been more explicit had he taken a folio page for the same purpose.

"Oh! yes, mamma, I know what you mean. After enumerating the use of seve-

ral tools which the little builder did not possess, he says,

> ' *his little beak was all,*
> And yet how neatly finished !' "

"The subject is most happily expressed, Mary; and I rejoice to find you have a relish for such studies. The lines, I think, run thus—and the repetition of them cannot be otherwise than pleasing, since they impart striking truth to an observing mind—

> ' It wins my admiration
> To view the structure of this little work,
> A bird's nest :—mark it well within, without;
> No tool had he that wrought, no knife to cut,
> No nail to fix, no bodkin to insert,
> No glue to join :—his little beak was all,
> And yet how neatly finished !'

"James Montgomery has also written some beautiful lines, in a poem entitled the ' Pelican Island,' in which he describes how

each kind of bird continues to build after its own fashion, without any variation,

'While every kind a different structure frames;'

and that, in building, no species attempts

'To alter or diminish any thing
In that of which Love only knows the secret,
And teaches every mother for herself,
Without the power to impart it to her offspring.'

"While we are speaking of *instinct*, Mary, there are three little creatures that I wish to introduce to your notice, whose manner of feeding appears to be perfectly governed by it. I mean the squirrel, the field-mouse, and the bird called the nut-hatch, which all live much upon hazel-nuts, and yet open them each in a very different way. The squirrel, after rasping off the small end, splits the shell in two with his long fore-teeth, as your brother

does with a knife; and thus he comes at the kernel very readily. The little mouse having no such teeth, adopts another method: he nibbles a hole in the side of the nut, as regular as if drilled with a gimlet, and yet so small that one would wonder how the kernel can possibly be extracted through it; yet he is clever enough to obtain all its contents. The nut-hatch pursues his peculiar plan, no less consistently, though very different to the others; picking with his bill an irregular, jagged hole. But as this little artist has no paws to assist him in his work by holding the nut firm while he pierces it, like a skilful workman he fixes it, as it were, in a vice, into some cleft or crevice of a tree; when, standing over it, he pecks and hammers at it till he perforates the stubborn shell. While at this work, he makes a

rapping noise that may be heard at a considerable distance.

"But we have wandered far from our first subject, my love. I have not yet done with the cuckoo; for I intended to tell you, that so very little accurate knowledge of this bird's habits and mode of life have been obtained, that many absurd and fabulous stories have been invented about it. They are, however, now not generally believed. There appear to be several different kinds in various parts of the world, which not only differ in colour but in size and in note. That which appears in England is only found during the early summer months. Its note is heard earlier or later, according as the season seems to be more or less forward, and the weather inviting. From the cheerful voice of this bird the farmer may be better instructed

in the real advancement of the year than by his calendar, which is often found incorrect. These feathered guides come to us heaven-taught, pointing out the true commencement of the season; and by this bird's note the husbandman may learn when to sow his most useful seeds, and do such work as depends on a certain temperature of the air."

"If the cuckoo is only seen in the spring, mamma," said Mary, "what becomes of it during the winter and the other parts of the year?"

"That is a very proper enquiry, my dear," returned her mother, "and I should be glad were I able to satisfy it. I believe the most general, and perhaps the most probable opinion is, that as quails and woodcocks change their abode in winter, and become birds of passage, so also does

the cuckoo; but to what country it retires in the winter, how it provides for its supply during that season, or whether it has ever been seen on its journey, are questions which no one could yet satisfactorily account for."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The white-wash'd farm-house with its plat of green
Outspread the hospitable porch before,
Presents to every eye a pleasing scene,
With hens, and broods of chickens sprinkled o'er;
While geese and goslings in the pond hard by
With sportive ducklings in their pastimes vie."

MARY and her mother now drew near the end of their walk, having reached the little gate which led into a neat farm-yard. In front of the house, which had been newly white-washed, and the cleanly appearance of which bespoke the industry of its inmates, was a large square grass-plat, where

stood several coops containing broods of young chickens, that, creeping from under the rails, ran fearlessly about, to the no small alarm and vexation of the poor old hens confined within. One end of this green sloped gently towards a semicircular pond, thickly enclosed on the opposite side with various bushes and shrubs, affording a shady and secure retreat to the waterfowl which delighted to visit it. A beautiful brood of goslings were here swimming merrily, catching at the flies and insects that frequent the water, accompanied by the parent geese, which stretched out their long necks, uttering very dissonant sounds as the visitors approached; probably in fear of their young ones being disturbed.

"On the edge of the pond, just ready to set off on their first watery frolic, were ten ducklings, the prettiest creatures imagin-

able, dressed in their infant coats of delicate yellow down. The old duck, their mother, happy to escape from her long confinement of four weeks to the nest, and proud to see her patient cares so well rewarded, bustled about with an air of great importance, approached the water's edge, calling her young charge around her; and off they all set, skimming lightly over the surface of the water, almost as bright and as swift as the sunbeams that played amongst the leaves. In this nice enclosure the various domestic fowls enjoyed liberty with perfect safety; and the sight was a very delightful one to Mary, who felt a great love for the young animals of every kind that she was acquainted with.

The industrious family within doors, consisting of a mother, three daughters, and a son, were busily employed in their

several occupations; but no sooner did they perceive their visitors approach, than Mrs. Tindall wiped her hands, left the butter she was weighing up into pounds, and respectfully came forward to welcome her guests. The good woman's eyes glistened with pleasure to see her little favourite so blooming and so happy, and in the kindest manner she begged they would enter her little parlour and rest themselves. Mary and her mother gladly accepted the invitation, and seated themselves at a window that overlooked all the little feathered families we have mentioned. In addition to which, numerous pigeons, of great variety and beauty, were continually flying down from a dovecot, to share the grain which lay scattered about for them. After sitting a few minutes chatting to Mrs. Tindall, her visitors said they were not at all

fatigued, and would gladly walk with her into the dairy, where they supposed her morning's business lay, and which they should be sorry to interrupt.

"If you please to visit that homely place, madam," said she, "my girls will be very happy to see you. They are all busy there; but little Fanny can well be spared now, to show Miss Mary the two young calves which are frisking about in the orchard: they are great pets with Fanny, I assure you, and will come to lick her hand whenever she calls them."

Here they found Lucy and Susan Tindall: the former, a fine girl of fourteen, had taken her mother's place at the butter-tray, and washed and moulded up several pounds ready to be sent to market; while her sister, who was two years younger, was busy at the cheese-tub, straining the curd

from the whey. Nor was their brother idle. He was a boy of kind dispositions, and loved to help his mother and sisters, that their work might be all finished by dinner-time. As the business of the dairy required a great deal of water, he took care to supply them with it, on the days for churning and making cheese; and carried away the heavier utensils for them after they had been used. On other days he assisted his father in the fields, or rode his pony to the town for errands.

Mary examined every thing in the dairy with her usual attention; but as she had frequently seen them before, and these employments have been so many times described by other writers, I will not tire my little readers by repeating them. She therefore begged a bit of cheese-curd for the young chickens; and Fanny having leave

to escape further employment, away ran the two little girls, as nimbly as a young kid that followed them from the kitchen-door. They had not been long out when this frolicsome creature, as if to make sport for his play-mates, bounded forward out of sight, ran round an old building, and soon afterwards made his appearance on the utmost ridge of the thatched roof of a barn, where he stood firmly, looking saucily down upon all below.

"Ah! Frisk, you sly rogue," cried Fanny, "you think to alarm me, do you, by climbing up so high, and are in hopes that I shall tempt you down with a bit of something nice? But indeed, Mr. Frisk, I shall do no such thing; for you have played off so many of these tricks, that I begin to be tired of them: so run about as long as it is pleasant, and then find the way

down by the same old shed that helped you up."

The little girls walked into the orchard to visit the two beautiful red and white calves, which pleased them much by their gentleness: then looked in at the hen-house, where Fanny collected some eggs, which it was her daily task to do, holding them carefully in her little apron. Here several hens were sitting, apparently in patient expectation of more active duties, when their young should have burst open the shelly prison in which they lay, and come forth winged creatures, endowed with faculties suited to their wants.

Still Frisk continued to gambol upon the barn; sometimes running along the top, then precipitately bounding to the very eaves, as if he would suddenly leap down; but he cunningly contrived to stop

short, so as to save himself from falling, and would stand peeping over, with a pitiful whine to excite attention.

"How can he come down?" asked Mary. "I do not see any way for him, and am really afraid he will fall. Do call him, dear Fanny."

"Oh! no," returned Fanny; "indeed he will not fall. Come round this way, Miss Mary, and we shall find how he managed to get up; and as you are so thoughtful about the scamperer, I will gather a fresh cabbage-leaf from the garden, for you to hold towards him, which will soon entice him to the ground. My father says I need not be afraid that Frisk should come to any harm when he climbs so high, as goats live generally where there are mountains, and like best to scramble among rocky places."

They soon reached the spot; and as Mary held up a nice crisp green leaf, the playful creature leaped first upon the old shed that joined the barn, then upon a mound of earth; and was frisking around her in an instant to claim the offered dainty. Having munched all away to the stalk, he next began to nibble the strings of Fanny's shoes, and to bite her frock, till she was obliged, in self-defence, to pick up a stick and keep him at a proper distance by a few gentle pats. "I love Frisk very much," said she; "but he is so fond of mischief and play, that father says we must part from him; and I know it will be right for me to let him go to some other place, unless we can keep him tied up in the stable. It was only last week that he stole my common straw bonnet, and munched it all up, so that it was quite

destroyed; and many other things he has carried away, which cannot be found. My mother never approved of our making such a pet of him in the house; and I think it would have been much better if we had left him to run about the yard and meadows; for our great indulgence has spoiled him, and we have made too much of him, on account of his droll actions."

Mary was now summoned to attend her mother, who wished to return, now that her business with Mrs. Tindall was finished, which was to order some fowls and eggs to be sent to her house the next day. The good woman, however, begged that she might offer them some refreshment; and they willingly consented to eat a biscuit, and drink a glassfull of her nice fresh whey. The exercise Mary had taken this morning in the open air, rendered this beverage

very acceptable, and she thought she had never before tasted any thing so delicious.

Having taken leave of the worthy family, Mary and her mother proceeded homewards. The little girl appeared for some time rather thoughtful: at length she said, "How is it possible, mamma, that fowls and other birds should be able to sit for so long a time upon their nests while they are hatching? Only think of it: a hen sits three weeks, a duck and a goose four. I am surprised that the poor creatures, which are at other times so active, do not become quite stiff and tired."

"If the matter were left to their own choice, my love," returned her mother, "I have no doubt they would give the preference to perfect liberty; but the power of instinct is so great, as I have before endeavoured to explain to you, that animals

appear to be driven by it to perform their several occupations and offices, and to remain almost, if not quite passive, under its influence. Nothing can exceed the patience of birds while hatching: neither the calls of hunger nor the near approach of danger can drive them from their nest; they will searcely leave it often enough to procure a scanty supply of food, just sufficient to keep them from starving. But as soon as the infant progeny make their appearance, the parent birds seem to undergo a great change in disposition: they are never wearied of continuing on the wing when necessary; and instead of being timid, passive creatures, become all at once bold and courageous in the defence of their young. When we are at home, Mary, I can give you, for a reading lesson to-day, some good remarks on this subject, written

by Dr. Goldsmith, and also some by Addison, both of whom were celebrated writers of the last century. For the present we must hasten onward, or I fear we shall keep dinner in waiting, as the time is growing late."

CHAPTER IX.

"What bids the patient bird with brooding breast
Sit o'er the embryo nurslings of her nest,
Waiting the time when bursts their prison-shell
To free the callow captives from their cell?
By what command, to climes of sunnier light
Do birds of passage wing their autumn flight?
The power of instinct, unto these assign'd,
Fulfils the needful functions of their kind;
And in its limits amply serves to prove
Their GREAT CREATOR'S *Wisdom*, *Power*, and *Love*."

The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and swallow, observe the time of their coming.—*Jeremiah*, viii. 7.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Gray asked Mary to accompany her into the library for an

hour, as was their frequent custom. Her mother then took out some work, and reaching down a book, requested Mary to read the following pages, with which she readily complied.

"In general every bird, in order to catch its young, resorts to those climates or places where its food may be found in greatest plenty; and always at that season when provisions are in the greatest abundance. The large birds, and those of the aquatic kind, choose places as far distant from man as possible, their food being mostly different from the grain cultivated by human labour. Some birds, which have only the serpent to fear, build their nests hanging upon the end of a small bough, and form the entrance from below; being thus secured from the serpent and monkey tribes, both of which are deadly enemies

to the poor little creatures. Of course, this plan is only pursued in those countries where reptiles and monkeys are found; but all the little birds that live upon fruit and corn, and that are too often unwelcome intruders upon the fruits of human industry, use also every precaution when making their nests to conceal them from man. On the other hand, the larger kind of birds that live remote from human society, use every stratagem and care to render their habitations secure from the attacks of wild beasts or vermin.

"If a brute be taken out of his instinctive habits, or removed from the possibility of practising them, you find him entirely deprived of understanding. With what caution does the common hen provide herself a nest in places unfrequent-

ed, and free from disturbance! When she has placed her eggs in such a manner that she can cover them, what care does she take in turning them frequently, that all parts may partake of the vital warmth! When she leaves them for a short space of time to provide for her own needful sustenance, how punctually does she return before they can have time to cool, and so become incapable of producing a living chick! In the summer you see her indulging in greater freedoms, and quitting her care sometimes for two hours together; but in cold weather, which is frequent early in spring, when the rigours of the season would chill the principle of life and destroy the young one, were it not for her fostering warmth, she grows more assiduous in her

attendance, and stays away but a very short time, and even that very rarely.

"When the period for the birth of the young bird approaches, with how much nicety and attention does she help the chick to break from its prison! Not to take notice of her covering it so carefully from the injuries of the weather, providing it with proper nourishment, and teaching it to help itself; nor to mention her forsaking the nest, if, after the usual time of reckoning, the young ones do not make their appearance. A chemical operation could not be followed with greater art or diligence than may be seen in hatching a chick; though there are many birds that show a much greater degree of sagacity than the common hen. Although she has all this seeming ingenuity, the hen, considered in other respects, is really without

the least glimmerings of thought or common sense. She mistakes a piece of chalk for an egg, and sits upon it in the same manner; she is insensible to any increase or diminution in the number of eggs she lays; she does not distinguish between her own eggs and those of another kind of fowl; and when the birth appears of a bird which may be totally different to her young ones, she will cherish it as tenderly as the rest. A hen, accompanied by a brood of ducklings, will stand affrighted at the edge of the pond, trembling for the safety of her young charge, which she sees venturing into so dangerous an element. As the different principle which acts in different animals cannot be termed reason, so, when we call it instinct, we mean something we have no knowledge of. It appears to me the immediate direction of Providence, and

such an operation of the Supreme Being, as that which determines all the portions of matter to their proper centres.

" Birds in general, though they have much to fear from man and from each other, are seldom scared away from their usual haunts. Although they are so perfectly formed for a wandering life, and are supplied with powers to satisfy all their appetites and desires; though they are so well fitted for changing place with ease and rapidity, yet the greater number remain contented in the districts where they have been bred, and by no means exert their desires to roam in proportion to their capability. The rook, if undisturbed, never shows an inclination to leave his native grove: the blackbird still frequents its accustomed hedge; and the redbreast, though seemingly mild, claims a certain district as

his own, from which he seldom moves, but drives from thence, without pity, every one of the same species. Birds appear to be excited to migration by no other motives but those of fear, climate, or hunger. It must surely be one of these powerful influences that causes what are called birds of passage, every year to forsake us for some time, and again to make their regular and expected return.

"Nothing has more employed the curiosity of mankind than these annual emigrations, and yet few subjects continue so much involved in darkness. The most commonly received opinion is, that the cause of their retreating from these parts of Europe, is either a scarcity of proper food at certain seasons, or the want of a secure asylum during the time of building and bringing up their young. Thus the star-

ling in Sweden, at the approach of winter, finding no longer a subsistence in that kingdom, descends every year into Germany; and the chaffinches of the same country are seen every year to fly through Holland in large flocks, to pass their winter in a milder climate; others, with a more daring spirit, prepare for journeys that might intimidate even human perseverance. Thus quails forsake, in spring, the burning heats of Africa for the milder sun of Europe; and when they have passed the summer with us, they steer their flight back again, to enjoy in Egypt the temperate air which then begins to be delightful. This, with them, seems to be a preconcerted undertaking; they unite together in some open place for several days before their departure, and by an odd kind of chattering, appear to hold a consultation

on the right method to proceed. When their plan is resolved upon, they all take flight together, and in such vast numbers, that to mariners at sea they seem like a cloud that rests on the horizon. The strongest, boldest, and far the greater number of them, make good their intention, and arrive safely at their journey's end; but many there are, who, not well apprised of their own strength for the undertaking, grow weary in the way, and, quite spent by the fatigue of their flight, drop down into the sea, and sometimes upon the decks of vessels, where they become an easy prey to the sailors.

"The migration of water-fowl, such as the duck tribes, from the northern regions, usually begins in September, when they quit their retreats, and disperse themselves over all the southern countries of Europe.

It has often been a subject of astonishment how animals, to all appearance so dull and irrational, should know whither to steer, and when to set out upon so great an undertaking. In all probability, the same instinct which governs their other actions, operates also in this. They rather follow the weather than the country; they fly only from colder or warmer climates into those of an opposite nature; and finding the variations of the air as they proceed to be in their favour, they go on till they find land to repose on, and circumstances adapted to their necessities. It cannot be supposed that birds have any memory of a country in which they might have passed a former winter; it cannot be supposed that they see the country towards which they are travelling from their height in the air,

since, though they were to mount for miles, the convexity of the globe would intercept their view; it must therefore be, that they are impelled onwards as they continue to perceive the atmosphere more suitable to their present wants and dispositions."

"That will do, my love," said Mrs. Gray, "and I am much obliged to you for reading so distinctly. I think I may guess, by your manner of reading, the subject has been an agreeable one."

"Quite so, my dear mother," replied Mary; "and now may I go and have a run in the garden with Arthur? He says he has some new-blown flowers to show me."

"Certainly, dearest; I have no wish to detain you from so pleasant a recreation. Go and enjoy yourself, free from all care

and anxiety, with an affectionate brother; but endeavour to bear in mind, that

E'en the lowly daisy in the spring,
The lab'ring ant, and every smaller thing
That creeps on earth, that swims, or soars in air,
Is each the object of the tenderest care :
None can unbidden rise, unheeded fall,
For one Almighty Parent governs all !"

THE END.

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